

**February 24, 2010**

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Today, U.S. Rep. Michael Arcuri (NY-24) voted in support of the Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act to ensure that consumers get a real choice and a fair plan when purchasing health insurance. The Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act will take away the federal anti-trust exemption for health insurance companies, requiring them to compete fairly and adhere to the same anti-trust laws as other industries.

"This is the type of incremental, positive change to our health care system that we need to be making here in Congress to make a real impact on healthcare reform in America," **Arcuri said.** "This bi-partisan legislation is a perfect example of how Republicans and Democrats can work together to reform our nation's healthcare system and will ensure that health insurance companies play by the rules and render them unable to stack the deck against hardworking families while promoting much needed competition in the marketplace. Currently in the health insurance industry, families are facing higher premiums, a lower quality of coverage and limited choices while the insurance companies are raising prices and turning record profits. Enough is enough. Both sides of the aisle often talk about increasing competition in the healthcare marketplace to benefit the consumer, this bill does exactly that."

For 65 years, the health insurance industry has been legally exempt from federal anti-trust laws, making the federal government unable to even investigate evidence of possible anti-competitive practices. In the last 14 years alone, there have been 400 mergers among health insurers, and now 94% of all insurance markets are "highly concentrated" - meaning consumers have little or no choice between insurance providers.

Health insurers that were previously exempt from anti-trust laws will now bear legal responsibility for price fixing, dividing up territories among themselves and sabotaging their competitors in order to gain a monopoly in the marketplace. Such practices have been outlawed in other industries for decades.

The Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act passed the floor of the House of Representatives today with a vote of 406-19.

The legislation is supported by numerous groups, including the American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America, Center for Justice and Democracy, and U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

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